

The AFCON Sentinel

Newsletter of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska

Volume 28, Number 4

August 2024

Academic Integrity in Academic Publishing

David Moshman

Academic freedom, in the [definitive 1940 AAUP statement](#), includes “full freedom in research and in the publication of the results.” Any law that prevents publication of academic research because it reaches conclusions the government deems objectionable is a clear violation of academic freedom.

In recent controversies over academic freedom in publication, however, [the questions are more subtle](#), requiring detailed consideration of the rights, roles, and responsibilities of authors, editors, reviewers, publishers, and readers. In such cases, I suggest, the rights of individuals are a function of their roles and responsibilities and can only be understood within a general context of respect for the academic integrity of academic journals. Here are three examples.

In a 2017 article in the [feminist philosophy journal *Hypatia*](#), Rebecca Tuvel began with Rachel Dolezal, who, after presenting as a Black woman for years, was widely ridiculed and condemned because her parents were white. Meanwhile, Caitlyn Jenner “graced the cover of *Vanity Fair*, signaling a growing acceptance of transgender identity.” After considering multiple similarities and differences, making arguments, anticipating counterarguments, and providing detailed rebuttals, Tuvel concluded that genuinely

transracial persons—no less than transgender persons—are due full respect.

Many of *Hypatia*’s readers immediately dismissed the article as “offensive,” “wack shit,” and “crap.” Deeming Tuvel “transphobic,” “racist,” “crazy,” and “stupid,” they condemned her for “epistemic violence” and “discursive transmisogynistic violence.” Over eight hundred scholars signed an open letter urging that the article be retracted because “its continued availability causes further harm.” A majority of *Hypatia*’s board of associate editors extended “our profound apology to our friends and colleagues in feminist philosophy, especially transfeminists, queer feminists, and feminists of color, for the harms that the publication of the article on transracialism has caused.”

In response, *Hypatia*’s editor made clear that the article in question had been properly reviewed, that the reviewers had recommended publication, that she had accepted it for publication, and that she stood behind the process, the decision, and the author. *Hypatia*’s board of directors wrote: “*Hypatia* is bound by principles of publication ethics to stand by its editors, referees, and authors except in specific cases such as plagiarism and fraud. These principles have been thoughtfully designed to establish critical conditions for progress in inquiry.”

Over the next year, however, the departures of the editor, most of the associate editors, and ultimately the entire board of directors raised serious questions about the

academic integrity of the journal. [A 2023 Hypatia article by Rima Basu](#), perhaps reflecting *Hypatia*'s new editorial policy, proposed extending the work of institutional review boards beyond the protection of human research participants to the protection of all people and groups from ideas and conclusions deemed morally unacceptable.

Here's another case: [Perspectives on Psychological Science \(PoPS\)](#) is a major journal of the Association for Psychological Science (APS). In spring 2022, Bernhard Hommel sent *PoPS* a manuscript responding to a 2020 *PoPS* article by Steven Roberts and co-authors that presented the results of a study of race with respect to the editors, authors, and contents of six major psychological journals. The Hommel critique deplored what Hommel perceived as a trend toward ideology and activism in psychological research and advocated a broader conception of diversity, arguing that Roberts' focus on race and his concluding recommendations were not justified by the evidence provided.

The editor accepted the manuscript for publication based on three favorable reviews and invited all three reviewers to expand their reviews into commentaries for publication. He also invited Roberts to reply to what were now four critiques of his work and invited Hommel to write a final rejoinder. Although the commentaries from the three reviewers were accepted by the editor without any review process, Roberts was asked to revise his commentary prior to publication in response to a detailed critique by Hommel.

On December 2, 2022, Roberts posted his [revised commentary](#) online along with his account of what he perceived as unfair treatment, which he attributed to systemic racism. This led to a petition signed within days by over a thousand psychologists, beginning with a charge of racism and demanding, among other things, the immediate resignation of the editor. APS

concurrent and accepted his resignation on December 6. Most of the journal's associate editors resigned in protest. As of July 2024, [a new editor has yet to be named](#) and the review of new submissions, which was suspended nineteen months ago, has yet to resume.

One last case: On June 3, the [Columbia Law Review](#) published its latest issue online. Within hours the board of directors shut down the website in order to prevent access to the newly released issue because of an article by Rabea Eghbariah offering a novel conceptualization of Israeli and Palestinian history that coordinates matters of settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, occupation, apartheid, and [genocide](#). Access to the journal was restored on June 7.

If the journal's board was using the standards proposed for *Hypatia*, it might have been concerned that Eghbariah's account of Israeli history would be offensive, and perhaps even harmful, to Israelis, Zionists, and/or Jews. But the standard for determining what gets published in an academic journal is not whether some readers may be offended or upset. Eghbariah's manuscript, after careful vetting and revisions, had been deemed by the law review's editors to have met academic standards of evidence and argument.

The *PoPS* case seems to me more complicated than either of the others. I'm not convinced the charge of racism was justified but there does seem to have been a questionable pattern of viewpoint discrimination in the review process. The abrupt dismissal of the editor, however, made him a victim too. In all three cases we see the importance of making and respecting academic judgments about what to publish. To compromise this undermines the academic integrity of academic journals.

David Moshman is a professor emeritus of educational psychology at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he taught,

studied, and wrote about human reasoning, rationality, and development, including the role of intellectual freedom in education. <https://www.routledge.com/authors/i20496-david-moshman>

This article originally appeared in July as a post on the AAUP's Academe blog:

<https://academeblog.org/2024/07/19/academic-integrity-in-academic-publishing/>

A June post by Moshman on academic freedom in relation to Gaza and genocide can be found here:

<https://academeblog.org/2024/06/24/gaza-genocide-and-academic-freedom/>



Note from the President:

Wyatt Packard

Greetings *The Sentinel* readers! As I assume the role of AFCON President, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I have worked in the public library field for 12+ years, and in that time I have prioritized information access, intellectual freedom, and advocacy work. I earned my Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia and my Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a management major and law minor. I also serve as Chair of the Nebraska Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Round Table and on the Advocacy and Strategic Planning Committees. I have appreciated being part of AFCON because, as a coalition of organizations, we are able to work together to protect and promote academic freedom, as well as learn from

each other's different experiences. I believe that we grow stronger as individuals, and as a society, by encouraging the free exchange of ideas as a means of fostering respectful debate and the development of solutions to issues.

The 108th Nebraska Legislature began its first special session on July 25th after being ordered by Governor Pillen to convene to address property taxes. AFCON will be monitoring legislation and debate, particularly as one of Governor Pillen's ideas for local property tax relief is the State of Nebraska assuming the responsibility of being the primary funding source for K-12 public schools. While the AFCON Board of Directors has not voted on an official position regarding this issue, AFCON has long supported the value of local control of public schools and the benefits that experience and oversight provides communities.

The AFCON Board of Directors also wishes to thank Past-President Shee' Covarrubias for her work as President. We are pleased that Shee' is able to continue to serve on the AFCON board and we thank her for her continued service to the organization.

An additional note of encouragement to please consider joining AFCON if you are not a current member. Everyone is also welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of membership status, so if you are interested, please contact me at NebraskaIntellectualFreedom@gmail.com.

ALA Annual 2024

Wyatt Packard

A fantastic contingent of library professionals attended the American Library Association's annual conference in San Diego from 6/28-7/2. This was my first time attending ALA and it was motivating to see the number of engaged professionals who are working to make their communities stronger.

On the first day, ALA and Unite Against Book Bans hosted the Rally for the Right to Read. This was an energizing experience and Hanif Abdurraquib (also a finalist for Lincoln City Libraries' One Book One Lincoln program) spoke. Free people read freely, and we all can contribute to making that possible by voting, contacting our elected representatives, and being vocal supporters of libraries and the free access to information.

Other highlights from the conference included:

- Learning about a library who uses their makerspace lab in conjunction with an entrepreneurship program
- Visiting with authors
- Learning about ways to increase collaboration between libraries and their foundations
- Approaches to using data analysis to make library decisions
- Intellectual freedom challenges in higher education
- A discussion of the new ALA standards for library services for incarcerated individuals
- What libraries have done to provide resources for homeschool families
- How anti-government groups use propaganda and rhetorical traps
- Ways to engage community members in fighting against funding reductions

I look forward to seeing how I can apply these ideas in my work as a librarian. Please let me know if you would like any additional information about these sessions!

SAVE THE DATE

AFCON will partner with the American Association of University Professors for a joint annual meeting on Saturday, November 9 from 9-1 p.m. in the University of Nebraska Student Union with a focus on academic freedom and advocacy.

AFCON

www.academicfreedomnebraska.org

The Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska was founded in 1988 to promote intellectual freedom in Nebraska education and research, including freedoms of belief and expression and access to information and ideas.

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From the AFCON Constitution, Article I:

The purpose of AFCON shall be to promote academic freedom in Nebraska, defined as intellectual freedom in educational and research contexts. This includes freedoms of belief and expression and access to information and ideas. In pursuit of this general goal, AFCON shall:

1. Support application of the First Amendment in academic contexts, including schools, colleges, universities, and libraries.
2. Educate Nebraskans in and out of Academic settings, citizens and professionals, parents and students about the meaning and value of intellectual freedom, intellectual diversity, mutual respect, open communication, and uninhibited pursuit of knowledge, including the role of these ideals in academic contexts and in democratic self government.
3. Assist students, teachers, librarians, researchers, and others confronted with censorship, indoctrination, or suppression of information or ideas in academic settings.

4. Act as liaison among groups in the State of Nebraska that support academic freedom.

JOIN OR RENEW

Rod Wagner, Treasurer

If you are interested in defending and expanding academic freedom in Nebraska, we welcome you or your organization as a member of AFCON. Annual dues are \$120 for institutions, \$15 for individuals, and \$5 for students. Individual life memberships are available for \$150. You can pay by visiting our website at <https://www.academicfreedomnebraska.org/>

Memberships and donations can also be made by check (payable to AFCON). Send check to AFCON Treasurer, 3901 S. 27th St.,#47, Lincoln NE 68502.

Organizational members are entitled to a representative on the AFCON board. We also have at-large board members. You may express your interest to the president to be considered for appointment to the board.

Local Links

AG Files Lawsuit Against TikTok

<https://alliancetimes.com/ag-files-lawsuit-against-tiktok/>

In Nebraska State Board of Education races, 'school choice' and library books are key issues

https://norfolkdailynews.com/news/in-nebraska-state-board-of-education-races-school-choice-and-library-books-are-key-issues/article_b3900a8a-0c7f-11ef-b57a-c77cdd62f71a.html

National Links

SCOTUS rejects suit alleging federal government bullied social media into censoring content

<https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2024/06/26/scotus-rejects-suit-alleging-federal-government-bullied-social-media-into-censoring-content/>

Parents sue Florida Board of Education over book ban policy

<https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2024/06/06/parents-sue-florida-board-of-education-over-book-ban-policy/>

Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska
Board of Directors Meeting
Via Videoconference
July 13, 2024

Present:

Peggy Adair, secretary, legislative liaison
John Bender, representing UNL Faculty Senate
Bob Haller, chief baker, director at large
Laurie Thomas Lee, representing American Civil Liberties Union, Nebraska
Dave Moshman, policy coordinator
Wyatt Packard, president, representing Nebraska Library Association
Todd Schlechte, webmaster, director at large
Rod Wagner, treasurer, representing Nebraska Center for the Book

MINUTES

President Wyatt Packard called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

MINUTES: A motion was made by Moshman, second by Bender, to approve minutes of the AFCON board meeting held on June 8, 2024. Motion carried on a voice vote.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Wagner presented the treasurer's report. Balance on hand as of July 13, 2024, is \$3,209.04.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Adair reported Governor Pillen plans to call a special session of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature to address the issue of property taxes. To date no specific plan has been made public.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Packard reported Shee Covarrubias has resigned her position as AFCON president due to illness. Covarrubias remains a member of the AFCON board of directors. Packard has graciously agreed to continue to assume the duties of president.

ANNUAL MEETING: Packard reported he met with Tim Hill of AAUP to discuss a joint annual meeting with AFCON. The tentative plan is to hold the meeting on Saturday, November 9, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the University of Nebraska Student Union. The main responsibility of AFCON will be to plan and organize a panel on advocacy.

Lee made a motion to authorize Packard to spend up to \$500 from AFCON's vast treasury to help pay for costs for the event. Moshman seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote.

SENTINEL: Wood reported via email the deadline for articles to be published in the August edition of the *Sentinel* is July 24, 2024.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

Nebraska Library Association – Packard attended the ALA Annual Conference in San Diego. Packard noted intellectual freedom challenges in higher education was one theme of the event.

Nebraska Center for the Book – Wagner reported the annual meeting of the Center for the Book will be held October 12, 2024, in a combined event with the Nebraska Book Festival. More information will be coming soon.

There being no further business, the AFCON board meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Adair, Secretary



The AFCON Sentinel is the newsletter of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska, published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October, and December. Unless otherwise indicated, articles represent the views of the authors. All issues of the AFCON Sentinel are available here:

<https://www.academicfreedomnebraska.org/the-sentinel.html>

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